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Abstract
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Comments
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At the 1998 Genre conference, Peter Medway asked, "Is genre such a capacious concept that it is too fuzzy to do much analytical work?" In this chapter I look at a group of high school teachers from different disciplines who must, as part of the work of assessing student portfolios of writing across the curriculum, discuss genre, work with it, to decide which student texts meet the statewide criteria for a "good" text. In a broader sense, they must work with genre to decide what genres they will assign and teach in their (discipline-specific) classes to help students meet the requirements of a statewide portfolio assessment *and* of their classes/disciplines *and* of rhetorical actions in the "real world," which the assessment is designed to improve ultimately. Teachers are examining each student text in terms of three systems of activity—and three genres: a genre of assessment performance, a classroom genre, and some genre of "real-world" writing. Might the concept of genre help us understand the teachers' perceptions of student work?

Medway's concern that genre is too capacious and fuzzy a concept to do much analytical work is fully justified if one looks at genre either in purely formalist terms or even in terms of local activity viewed synchronically. Genre is in one sense about *kinds*, about classifying texts or other artifacts or actions synchronically according to formal features or immediate uses. But it is also about human relationships over time, as its etymological connection to the terms *kin*, *kinship*, and *kind* hints at (see Burke, 1950, pp. 19-27, 43-46; 1947, pp. 21-53). Viewed from the perspective of social action (Miller, 1994), genre is a way of talking not only about present actions, but also about the historical and imaginable actions of related people over time, kind-ness in a broad sense. So if we step back to theorize and study the various systems of activity and genre operating in the "universe of discourse" (Moffett, 1968) over time—the kind-ship system, to play on an anthropological term—then genres may begin to come into focus as part of ongoing, purposeful systems of human activities over time, and the capaciousness of the concept may allow us to see the range and depth of human activities and relationships that a single text may mediate, as it operates among different people with different motives and objects, immediately or over time—historically, actually—or imaginatively.

The relation between writing in formal schooling and writing in other systems of human activity is a central problem in writing research (e.g., critical pedagogy, writing in nonacademic settings, cognition in variable social contexts). To address these questions, I have been working (Russell, 1997) to synthesize Yrjö Engeström's (1987) systems version of Vygotskian cultural-historical Activity Theory with Charles Bazerman's (1994) theory of *genre systems*. By tracing the intertextual relations among disciplinary and educational genre systems, through the boundary activities of classrooms and their genre systems, one can construct a model of the ways classroom writing is linked to writing in wider systems of activity and use the concept of genre to rethink such issues as agency, task representation, and in this case, assessment.

Drawing on Carolyn Miller's (1984, 1994) conception of genre as social action, North American genre theory has viewed genre not defined in terms of formal features, but in terms of typified rhetorical actions—as a semiotic means of mediating actions within and among historically unfolding systems of purposeful activity, what Engeström's (1987) systems version of Activity Theory calls *activity systems*. In this view, the genres that students appropriate (or do not appropriate) in their schooling potentially link students to a range of powerful social systems of activity. Literacy is thus bound up not only with language and culture writ large, but with institutional and disciplinary—as well as local—networks of literate activity, mediated by systems of genres. Literacy is not seen as an autonomous skill (Street, 1984, 1996) but always as part of a system of purposeful interactions mediated by texts, texts always of some genre-in-use not only in the "universe of discourse" but in some particular system of human activity mediated by genres.

Bazerman's development of Miller's conception of genre as social action has allowed us to view genres as systems of intertextual relations mediating and coordinating a wide range of linked actions. I am suggesting here that systems of genres in use in some textually mediated activity system (or textually mediated interactions among related activity systems) can usefully be viewed as having two dimensions of genre perception that Medway's comments suggest (as well as Swales', 1990), and which these teachers' discussions reveal: "breadth" (the range of genres available) and "depth" (the ways those genres mediate activity at various levels of specialization within a single activity system and among activity systems). These two dimensions may help map the capaciousness of genre as a concept, and help us do analytical work with it—in this case understanding how teachers perceive the relation between the genres of schooling (including assessment) and the genres of "real-world" writing beyond school, in a trade or profession. One dimension is the range of genres available to a person or group operating in the activity system (similar to what Devitt [1991] calls the "genre set"). In a photography class, for example, students might write essay answers to demonstrate their understanding of textbook principles to the teacher, or they might write and design a brochure promoting a new model camera for a local camera store, or instructions on how to use some new developing technique for future students or the readers of an amateur photography magazine. This dimension we might think of as "breadth" in the genre system of a photography class. Or one could expand to look at the range of genres taught in a high school, in all the disciplines and courses, or narrow to look at the genres an individual student has been exposed to or written.

Another dimension of genre systems is the ways those genres mediate activity at various levels of specialization or involvement within a single activity system and among activity systems. That is, as an individual works with others *over time* in an activity system, she comes to read and perhaps write genres required for further involvement. For example, for students in a photography class, explaining textbook principles on an essay exam requires less involvement in the activity system of photography than writing a brochure for a camera shop (one has to have at least visited a camera shop and seen brochures). Writing instructions for a new film-developing technique requires one to have read developing instructions and have used both old techniques and the new one in a darkroom, with all that implies of chemical baths, closed curtains, noxious fumes. This dimension we might think of as "depth" in the genre system of photography. Similarly, in a literature class the genres of poem paraphrase for teacher, book review for school newspaper, and new-historicist analysis of Hamlet's speech to the players for a literary journal begin to mark out not only the breadth of the genre system of literary criticism but also the depth of involvement of its participants. By viewing genres acting together in systems, one can begin to chart these dimensions

and make decisions about involving one's self or one's students in some activity system (or between activity systems, such as formal schooling and some profession).

It is important to note that in this systems view of genre, a single text can function in multiple activity systems to do different kinds of work. In other words, one text might function as more than one genre, if it is used in more than one activity system. For example, Hamlet can be a script to be performed (theater), a Renaissance drama to be interpreted (literary criticism), or a data set to be analyzed (philology). Genres embody expectations for the future, as well as linking us to past human activities. And learning to read or write a new genre can be—if one sees genre in its breadth and depth—a way of imagining different ways of being in the world, actually seeing one's self or one's students as potential participants in different *worlds* of human activity (activity systems) within the universe of discourse.

In this chapter I will use these two dimensions to analyze a transcript of six Kentucky high school teachers from five disciplines collaboratively evaluating students' portfolios as part of the state-mandated portfolio assessment, which contain texts from several different courses. I argue that this particular interdisciplinary assessment process allowed teachers to imagine student texts as operating in different activity systems—and different genres—beyond the assessment process, either in classrooms or in other activity systems beyond formal schooling (the "real world"). Discussions of genre not only encouraged them to appreciate genres of other fields, but also to consider the breadth of and depth of genre in their own fields, and imagine new possibilities for their teaching, beyond traditional classroom genres. Before turning to the transcripts, some background.

THE KENTUCKY EDUCATION REFORM ACT (KERA)

The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 was in part designed to improve the quality of student writing in general by moving pedagogy across the curriculum toward more student-centered focus and "real-world" experiences. KERA assessment of schools and teachers requires each student in the state in grades 4, 7, and 12 to complete a portfolio, which is scored in the school by a scoring team of teachers. The scores are then audited (selectively rescored by an audit team of teachers) at the state level to ensure reliability (consistency across schools). The portfolio consists of six pieces: a table of contents, a letter to the reviewer, a personal experience piece, a literary (creative writing) piece, and *at least two pieces from content area classes other than English language arts*, to encourage writing across the curriculum. It is scored using a standard holistic scoring guide that emphasizes

purpose/audience, idea development/support, organization, sentences, language, and correctness in an attempt to move pedagogy away from surface features and writing for the teacher-as-examiner, and toward transactional (Russell, Lewis, & Riggs, 1996).

The entire state assessment in all fields, of which the writing portfolio counts 14 percent, is low stakes for students, who do not have to achieve a particular score to graduate, but high stakes for teachers and schools. Schools are given rewards or sanctions based their scores improving from the previous administration.

In setting the system up in this way, the idea was to produce a large-scale writing assessment that makes it more difficult for schools and teachers to reduce and simplify writing instruction to a particular genre, such as those called for by traditional timed essays, which have been found to lead to drilling certain structures while leaving out wider and deeper engagement with content—what is called in assessment research "curricular crowding out." Hillocks' (1998) study of assessment in five states, including Kentucky, concludes: "Kentucky schools appear to have avoided this restriction and simplification by virtue of the portfolio assessment, which allows for a variety of authentic writing tasks produced under authentic conditions." Moreover, his study found that Kentucky has the most effective professional development program to support the assessment. And that professional development of teachers across the curriculum in writing instruction is focused on widening the range of genres to include more "real world" writing, as the state materials put it.

The Study

The present study asked how teachers from different disciplines perceive genre. If assessment allows or, as in Kentucky, requires students to write in a variety of genres for different purposes and audiences, how do teachers across the curriculum perceive those differences?

This is a question that has not much been asked because of a fundamental contradiction in secondary and college writing instruction. English teachers have traditionally taken responsibility for improving writing in general. Yet English teachers, like other teachers across the curriculum, identify strongly with a disciplinary tradition (Stodolsky & Grossman, 1995) and are drawn to expect the generic conventions of writing in their disciplines (if and when they require writing). Attempts to improve and assess writing across the curriculum—or to encourage process-oriented pedagogy drawn from English's reform efforts—may run into problems of genre perception. As long as teachers across the curriculum stick to traditional "classroom genres" (Christie, 1993)—and Applebee (1984, 1996) has found that extended writing

in high school sticks to a very few genres, such as book report and term paper—then problems of the specialization of knowledge and discourse in genres are masked. Genre differences are largely ignored in the routine of teaching the "content" of one's particular discipline.

But as reforms such as school-wide portfolios attempt to increase the "ecological validity" (Cole, 1996) of writing assessment and have students write "authentic" or "real-world" genres that go beyond writing for the *specific* instructor as *immediate* examiner (Britton, 1970), we need ways to theorize and study teachers and students' perception of genre (Petraglia, 1997). Though children's perception of genre has been studied to some extent (e.g., Kamler, 1994; Kucan & Beck, 1996), the perception of high school teachers and students has not received specific attention.

We chose Suburban High (pseudonym) to study because it afforded a unique opportunity to observe teachers and students discussing their perceptions of genre. Three years ago the English teacher in charge of portfolios convinced the principal and the department chairs that the best way to improve portfolio scores was to have *all* the faculty score the portfolios, termed "whole-school scoring." (In the vast majority of schools, only English teachers score.) She argued that by scoring portfolios, the other content-area teachers would learn what the requirements are and what the standards are—and get into significant discussions of writing with one another that would carry over into their assigning and teaching writing in their courses. A few other schools are now using whole-school assessment, and the State Department of Education is recommending it.

In the summer of 1995, the staff (n = 89) had a four-afternoon training workshop on scoring and teaching writing in the content areas, emphasizing ways to incorporate more "real-world" genres. In the spring of 1996, just before the scoring, they then received the state-mandated training all scorers receive. After they scored the portfolios at Suburban High, their scores were audited by the state audit team. The scoring they did had an 86 percent reliability rating. That is, their scores were in exact agreement 86 percent of the time with those of an independent team of three scoring judges chosen by the State Department to audit their scoring (using a four-point scale: Novice, Apprentice, Proficient, Distinguished). This is well above the statewide reliability rating of 75 percent (which is itself impressive). In the summer of 1996 they had another workshop on teaching transactional or "real-world" writing, which was termed "technical writing." Four days before the spring 1997 scoring, which I observed, the staff again received 3 hours of state-mandated scoring training, required each year for all scorers. For scoring, the staff was divided into 11 mixed-discipline scoring teams of 6-7 content-area teachers and administrators. Each scoring team first read 29 portfolios, double blind. The 29 portfolios were then rotated to a second team and then (the next day) to a third team.

One set of 29 randomly chosen portfolios was tracked through three scoring teams. Discussions were audiotaped and scorers were interviewed. The student authors were interviewed and all portfolios and training materials were collected. Discourse-based follow-up interviews with selected teachers and students were conducted three and seven months later.

IMAGINING GENRES: TEACHERS' DEBATES ABOUT STUDENT TEXTS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Throughout the exchange I analyze below (and others in this scoring group and others I observed) teachers in a scoring team are asking questions about how student texts function in three activity (and genre) systems. They are debating the genre expectations of portfolio texts (a) in the state scoring system, (b) in their respective disciplinary classrooms in terms of their potential pedagogical value, and (c) in "real-world" activity systems toward which texts and students are imaginatively aimed within the universe of discourse beyond schooling. They are, in other words, viewing each text as three genres: the genre of the assessment, the genre of a specific disciplinary classroom, and "real-world" writing in some genre. The most relevant genre to their activity of scoring is the genre of assessment performance, and this is the only genre that they don't have to imagine. Yet in order to assess the paper as performance, they must imagine it as a "real-world" genre, with a purpose and audience beyond the classroom and the assessment. And to develop their own teaching they must imagine genres for students to write in their own classrooms. Thus, the teachers (from several disciplines) in one scoring team are having a discussion about student writing in terms of its genre. What work does the concept of genre do?

As a final training exercise before scoring, the English teacher/table leader, Karl, has just taken them through his scoring rationale for a score of high-end Novice on an Exemplar portfolio, a "benchmark" portfolio from the training materials used to illustrate the qualities of a portfolio not quite good enough for Proficient.[1] Frank (technology/photography) points to the portfolio's expressive text, "Pizza and Coke Cartons," and challenges Karl's claim that there is a "real-life" audience. The team members are all well aware that the state scoring guidelines reward texts written to a specific audience with a specific purpose.

Frank, the technology teacher, as well as the other non-English teachers, is concerned that expressive writing of the kind valued in English classes does not have a specific audience. As retrospective interviews revealed, the non-English teachers are also concerned that the writing their

[1]All names are pseudonyms.

students did in their classes—addressed to more specific audiences—may not be adequately valued in the portfolio assessment.

Frank: Well, would you go over the *audience* on these pieces here? . . . Just take the Coke Carton, I mean the Pizza Coke Carton. Who is the audience for that?

Karl, the English teacher and scoring leader/trainer, is forced to imagine an audience (and thus a genre) beyond the traditional English classroom exercise of writing an expressive piece to defend the score on the student text. He responds to Frank by asserting that the expressive text has an audience beyond the classroom, a general audience, and therefore deserves credit on the Purpose/Audience criterion.

Karl: Well yeah and most of these students, they know the audience is, yeah, the teacher. But what we attempt to get them to do is to look beyond us. And write a piece that's amusing that if anyone would pick up your piece, that they would not want to put it down. Till they read what, look uh you know, till they read what you are saying.
Jim: Just an open audience, anybody?
Karl: Yea, yea.
Frank: So it really doesn't really specify audience then.
Karl: Course it would be quite obvious . . .

When Karl is challenged about the audience (and therefore the score) of a text that represents an "English" genre, he initially has difficulty articulating the audience for an expressive text, because he is so immersed in the genre system of his own field, where expressive writing is assumed to have universal appeal. From his disciplinary perspective in the activity system of English teaching, it is "obvious." He has not seen the depth of the genre of expressive writing in terms of its breadth or depth.

Gene (social studies) then challenges further with an example from the activity system of democratic politics from his own field, and an assignment based on it, which he imagines using in his own class.

Gene: OK. Well . . . Whereas if you were writing a letter to a congressman or something, you'd know the audience is the congressman.
Karl: Correct.
Frank: Whereas this [the expressive text] is just kind of a generic thing. It could be for anybody.
Karl: For anyone, right.
Frank: So would you count off for that?

Karl is forced to imagine the student expressive text in terms of some wider genre system, the "real world." He first locates the student text in terms of the activity system of literary publishing in all its "breadth" (magazine publishing) and then he begins, with some further imagining, to perceive the student text in terms of depth.

Karl: No, cause we teach them to write as though it's going to be published. If they're gonna write to a magazine, you know, the publisher for the magazine . . . what are some of the publishers of . . . a literary magazine in the school. Most of these would be written uh we try to tell them don't write to us but-
Denise: A school newspaper, yeah
Frank: You know, their peers would more than likely be the audience.

When forced to think about classroom exercises within a "real-world" genre system, Karl can further imagine the genre of a school literary magazine piece, and thus locate an appropriate genre in terms of a reasonable "depth" of involvement in that activity system for a high school student's expressive text, where the audience is student peers. The non-English teachers can immediately visualize this and agree. The debate over assessment criteria of "real-world" purpose and audience (genre) has brought the team to imagine the genre system of a field (literary publishing) in its breadth and various levels of depth.

Karl then moves to another traditional classroom genre of his activity system, literary criticism, to illustrate what he presently sees as the difference between writing for teachers and writing for the "real world."

Karl: That's why a lot of the AP [advanced placement literature course] papers we could not use those because they are written in a voice suitable for a college professor.

Karl does not yet perceive the genres of literary criticism as "real world," and thus considers them inappropriate for the portfolio—a common misperception among high school English teachers and one that the state-sponsored professional development programs have tried to correct. The classroom genres of literary criticism students write to prepare them for college literature courses (or get college advanced placement credit for such courses) are indeed linked to the genre system of professional academic literary criticism, though they are far away in "depth" from the literary criticism published in specialized journals such as *PMLA*. Even the most specialized literary critics began writing literary criticism in secondary school, and progressed through college and graduate school in the genre system of academic literary criticism—and some literary critics continue to write literary criticism

in genres less "deep": reviews in the popular press, or essays that appear in collections of criticism specifically for high school and beginning college students (e.g., the "Approaches to" series [Halio, 1966]). Though high school students cannot yet write or even read many of the genres that constitute the "depth" of the genre system, in all its specialization, they can read and write genres that require less involvement with the system, less "depth."

Karl's mistaken idea (from the point of view of the state assessment system) that the specialized discourse of various fields is not appropriate for the portfolios (as "real-world" writing) raises the very issue that the non-English teachers are most concerned about. The non-English teachers turn to the specialized genres of their own courses and disciplinary/professional activity systems to press the point that specialized ("technical") writing is not only a classroom exercise written for a teacher but also can be imagined as "real-world" genres. Denise (science), Gene (social studies), Jim (administrator) and Frank (technology) are not satisfied with Karl's explanation.

Denise: I don't see why they [specialized genres of literary criticism] can't be used then.
Karl: Well, because the state tells us that it must be more be more real life kind of writing.
Frank: Yeah, well—
Karl: exper- real world
Frank: Yeah, but-
Jim: Those would be more exposés and—
Denise: More technical.
Jim: Reports and stuff like that where . . .
Gene: Yea but it's uh that's a truer voice than you get here. You know that's a more *focused* voice. I guess that's what I'm saying that this is just raw generic voice to anybody, as you pretty much said. Which to me is not much of a voice. You know [in literary criticism] he's picked an audience out, I guess is what I'm saying. . .
Frank: Y'know it's just like on some of these high-end Apprentice [expressive] pieces like the one we just did . . . there wasn't much of an audience there, you know. Or you know, who was the audience? Well I feel the same way about this Pizza Coke Cartons. Anybody is the audience. You know. Whoever's reading it's the audience. So how can you take off for something like that when they're the same to me?

In Activity Theory terms, Gene and Frank are arguing that specialized ("technical") writing is "deeper" in a system of activity (and genre) and therefore, Gene implies, shows a more developed sense of audience and purpose, a "more focused voice."

The non-English teachers then begin imagining genres appropriate to Frank's technology courses—blueprints in an drafting course, for example—that might be appropriate for a portfolio though they are specialized.

Jim: But in a technical writing thing, though, Karl, he can establish an audience of people who sh—
Denise: But he couldn't put—
Jim: should have background, just people who have cursory background in blueprints if he writes a certain piece for it [a drafting course].
Karl: Right but say if he's writing for the general public . . . he could not be that presumptuous cause, you know, we'd be lost.
Denise: But if he's not [inaudible] saying . . .

Frank (technology) then immediately imagines documents involving blueprints in terms of its "depth" in the activity system of an architecture firm. And students, imagining themselves as writing to an architecture firm as they wrote texts in his drafting course, would be entirely justified in using "technical jargon" to achieve an appropriate voice.

Frank: But if he was writing to an architectural firm,
Karl: Surely!
Frank: then he could use all that technical jargon—
Karl: Do you get the difference? Got a difference. That's the difference.
Frank: and he'd be all right.
What you got, that's a different purpose.
Karl: A different purpose, a different audience

Frank (technology) quickly imagines student texts in his field as moving students deeper into some professional activity system, from the drafting classroom and portfolio assessment to a "real-world" counterpart. He is making a leap from school genres to the "deeper" involvement in writing that drafting courses can lead to.

At this point, the teachers reach an impasse on the question of whether specialized genres—and therefore the "depth" of genre—is suitable for the portfolio assessment. And in a deeper sense, they are asking whether the assessment is "crowding out" the "depth" of genre in their fields (and "depth of content," by implication).

Frank: So the person reading it still might not understand what he's saying
Denise: And that's the . . .
Frank: The person that's grading the portfolio.

Karl: Oh, but I doubt that anyone would write that [chuckles], would write that kind of way for a portfolio. We would caution that person that that wouldn't work.

Frank: That makes it awful hard in my class to write [for the portfolio].

Denise:—my [training] session. We were. We were encouraged to show what we know in the class. And for the technical piece they [State Department trainers] said that it was OK.

Karl: hmm

Frank: Cause some of my pieces were on developing film.

Karl: uh hmm

Frank: And they were very technical. And if you don't know anything about photography you probably wouldn't understand what they were talking about.

The teachers seem to be at an impasse when Frank from technology/photography challenges Karl from English, and Karl responds that students would not write highly technical documents for a portfolio, and that English teachers ("we") would caution against it. In the activity systems of English teaching and "writing" assessment, as Karl currently conceives them, highly technical prose (except for literary criticism) is traditionally not acceptable, and for the very good reason that Frank just mentioned. The English teachers and other assessors might not understand it, and students should not risk that. Yet that is precisely the kind of risk that the Kentucky portfolio initiative asks students and teachers to take, to put themselves imaginatively into an activity system, a "real world" that they are not (yet) a part of, through the genres that they write and read. It is even more difficult for Karl from English to imagine the purpose and audience of a document written for the blueprinting department of an architectural firm than it is for Frank to imagine the purpose and audience of a piece of personal expressive writing.

They are both experiencing the breadth of genre, the distances between their discursive systems in the universe of discourse. Neither has grasped the Kentucky portfolio assessment system's insistence that students reach out imaginatively to worlds beyond the classroom—or trusted that teachers from across the curriculum can reliably score portfolios with a wide range of genres, broad *and* deep. The consequence of this failure is a lack of nerve that is common to most writing assessments—curricular "crowding out," allowing only a limited breadth and depth of genres, and thus a limited engagement with the breadth and depth of some human activity.

Frank from technology/photography succinctly gets to the heart of the problem when he says, "That makes it awfully hard in my class to write." If writing is conceived as existing only in its breadth, as a range of different "forms"—writing defined as portfolio writing in Karl's terms, English writing—then the assessment will limit rather than expand writing and learning.

Seeing the breadth and depth of genre in writing is essential to prevent curricular "crowding out" in assessment—or assignments. By encouraging students to write "real-world" genres, the portfolio writing system, like formal schooling of which it is a part, intends to draw students toward deeper involvement with some worlds in the vastly wide universe of human activity mediated by writing.

These teachers, then, are wrestling with a fundamental contradiction of writing assessment, and of formal schooling itself—breadth versus depth of "coverage." Schools may invite students to explore, imaginatively, the universe of discourse, as Moffett (1968) put it, but neither teachers nor students can experience all of it in its depth. Teachers and students must specialize. Yet an Activity Theory approach to genre suggests we can make this contradiction productive, if we see the universe of discourse as encompassing many planetary systems of human activity mediated by a vastly wide range of genres. Moreover, these systems of activity (unlike planetary systems) are often linked together formally through complex networks of genres. Formal schooling can not only invite students to see the breadth of the discursive universe but also invite them to expand—again imaginatively—into the depths of some systems, to follow the system of genres to greater and greater imaginative involvement. "Coverage" is a poor metaphor. Expansion is a better metaphor to describe what education (and genres) do.

As Engeström (1987) suggests, learning is a kind of imaginative expansion into new activity systems. To invite students to move from the surface to (some of) the depths, teachers must imagine worlds of writing, systems of activity and genres, beyond formal schooling. But none of us, not even the most specialized of teachers, can be fully enough involved in even one activity system—let alone all of them—to be an ideal reader. There is no final arbiter, only wider and deeper penetration of the breadth and depth of (some of) the genres that mediate so many human activities, further imaginative exploration and expansion. Education is about futures, imagined futures, as is genre, in the sense that we perceive genre as a set of expectations for further action in some way(s), an invitation to join the people who write in these ways in acting in the ways they—act—and might act. And we cannot, of course, finally know the future, or predict with certainty whether our readers—or our students—will act in these ways in response to the texts we hold out as invitations to broader and deeper involvement.

Writing and assessment in formal schooling can constrain students imaginatively, as with the traditional five-paragraph theme in classrooms and on exams (curricular "crowding out"). Yet writing in formal schooling can also enable students—and teachers—to enter powerful systems of activity, both imaginatively and, eventually, "real world," if they open their classrooms and their assessments to the breadth and depth of genre in some activity system and across systems.

In this discussion, facilitated by collaborative portfolio assessment, the teachers find it necessary, as part of making their arguments for the writing of their disciplines, to imagine the breadth of genre in new ways: for their own classrooms and for the students in the school as a whole. They are also imagining the depth of genres, both in the ways students may take trajectories leading them more deeply into some system of activity, and the ways their own classes can, through structuring assignments, lead students into deeper involvement in those systems.

Yet they seem to come to an impasse because they haven't yet reached a level of understanding of one another's genres systems—or a level of trust that the assessment system will indeed reward writing in a range and depth of genres. Consequently, it may be difficult for them to include greater breadth and depth of genres in their teaching (and appreciate the breadth of their colleagues across the curriculum).

But I wondered how this kind of dialog, growing out of the activity of scoring and mediated primarily by the scoring guide, might affect the teachers and their uses of writing—and attitudes toward genre—over time.

Seven months later, in a retrospective interview based on this transcript, Frank, the technology teacher, revealed that he had originally been concerned that the scoring would be unfair and had therefore been very skeptical that portfolio writing might be useful in his teaching.

> Well, I don't know that in the past it's been fair to ask a student to submit a piece from my class because the people grading the portfolios wouldn't know anything about the subject and I think it would get graded off, or graded down. I think we've moved along here in the last year and they're asking for more technical writing, they're asking for more real work, real-world situation-type writing, so I think it's getting better. But back when we had this discussion I think things were getting taken off, graded off of students portfolios because people didn't know what they were talking about.

After attending professional development sessions on transactional writing, which reassured teachers that the intent of the portfolio was to include many genres, he had identified a number of assignments in his class as potential portfolio pieces. He pointed to assignments in his photography course, for example, that ask students to summarize articles from photography magazines, and a handout on developing a particular type of film, to be available in a local photography store. In his desktop publishing course students wrote a tri-fold brochure on the school for parents, "Something that they could pick up at the counseling office as they came in maybe to enroll or maybe shopping around for schools." He showed me materials he had created to help students think through their writing—and design—of documents,

which asked them to think in terms of "where in the world" people might pick up this writing and use it (genre, in the activity sense of the term, rather than a formalist sense).

Frank said that after the school-wide professional development sessions that emphasized "real-world" writing, he was more likely to trust his colleagues in English and other disciplines to grade portfolios pieces where there was "a definite audience there, [but] it might not be a big audience." And he was encouraging students to submit texts from his classes for their portfolios.

Similarly, this school-wide interdisciplinary dialog on the genres of school writing also challenged English teachers. Karl, for example, in a follow-up interview, expressed an expanding sense of genre, not only in other fields, where he allowed that "technical writing" could get a Proficient or Distinguished from the teacher/assessors, but also the writing of literary criticism. He observed that literary criticism, of the kind that students in Advanced Placement (AP) courses emphasize, is really "technical writing in English."

Five of the six teachers who participated in follow-up interviews indicated that conversations during scoring and training allowed them to see new ideas for incorporating writing into their curricula. I would suggest that conversations about genre like this one, facilitated by whole-school assessment, contributed to a developing sense of genre, of the breadth of the universe of discourse, the depth of genre in their own fields, and the genre possibilities for teaching. Teachers may develop not only a wider view of genre (that is, to see beyond their own discipline and come to understand and value the writing other disciplines do), but also to have a deeper view of genre—that is, to see possibilities for writing beyond the classroom genres that have evolved (and in some ways petrified) in their own disciplines. The interdisciplinary assessment of portfolios that encourages writing in "broader" and "deeper" genres became, in some cases, a tool for teachers to expand their notions of the role of writing in teaching, for curricular expansion rather than curricular "crowding out."

IMPLICATIONS: EXPLORING GENRES BROAD AND DEEP

Medway's concern that genre is too capacious and fuzzy a concept to do much analytical work is fully justified if one looks at genres either in purely formalist terms or even in terms of local activity viewed synchronically, because there is no way to judge what features distinguish one genre from another, or how a genre is perceived outside the local and momentary kairotic moment. But if we step back to theorize and study the various systems of activity and genre operating in the universe of discourse over time (Moffett, 1968), then genres may begin to come into focus as part of ongoing, purpose-

ful human activities, and the capaciousness of the concept may allow us to see the range and depth of human activity that a single text may mediate, as it operates as different genres among different people with different motives and objects, immediately or over time, actually or imaginatively.

This study suggests that some teachers began to perceive the breadth and depth of genre the portfolio assessment authorized, ranging from "popular" genres, which are considered the "real-world" goal by some, to various levels of specialization of genres operating in disciplines and professions into which many students will go in their diverse "real worlds." Teachers were then able to imagine new possibilities for their teaching—and students for their learning. This imaginative work made possible by considering the breadth and depth of genre in their fields, allowed for a curricular expansion and deepening through assessment, rather than the curricular crowding out so common in mass assessments that use a much more limited range and depth of genres, such as the five-paragraph theme so common in the United States (Applebee, 1984, 1996). Medway said on another occasion (Freedman & Medway, 1994) that a genre, put in simplest terms, is a form of words that worked once and might work again. Genres embody expectations for the future. And learning to read or write a new genre can be—if one sees genre in its breadth and depth—a way of imagining a different way of being in the world.

This study also suggests that perception of genre can operate across activity systems (e.g., disciplines and professions) not only in terms of "breadth" (the range of genres available) but also of "depth" (the ways those genres mediate activity at various levels of specialization within a single activity system and among activity systems). As we noted, the texts students choose to include in their portfolios can be thought of as functioning, at least potentially, in different activity systems: a specific classroom for which it was written, the school-wide assessment system, and the "real-world" activity that the students and/or teachers imagine it to be written for.

In a sense, each text in a portfolio works potentially as three genres: a vehicle for and evidence of classroom learning; evidence for state-wide assessment of writing; communication in some system of activity beyond Suburban High, in the "real world." (Some student texts are indeed feature stories and reviews published in local newspapers, poems given to lovers, academic essays sent to colleges as part of applications, etc.). Though one function may dominate at any one moment in time and place (the object of mass assessment is what put these teachers in the room together reading these portfolios), some teachers became aware, at various points, of the ways these texts functioned—and might function—in other systems of activity.

Two of these genre systems, the classroom and the state assessment, are more "real" in the sense that the students and teachers are participating directly and immediately in them. But it is worth emphasizing—as the theory of activity and genre I am developing here suggests—that the most salient

genres for the students and the teachers are the *imagined* ones. Those genres, we must remember, are the ones toward which the students are moving in their lives, potentially. And these, as the Kentucky Portfolio system calls them, are the "real-life" genres, toward which the actions of students in teachers, in classrooms and assessment systems, are designed to point. Schools and the wider social practices toward which schools orient students are *kindred* human activities, always linked potentially by the kind-ness of genres they share or be imagined to share. So that it is impossible finally to conclude, *Non scolae, sed vitae discimus*. It is never only school, but life we speak of. And the capaciousness of genre, viewed in terms of its breadth and depth, past and future as well as present, can be a resource for understanding the relation between the activities of formal schooling and other human activities.

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